

wonder than anything else, and Elizabeth Young's "Lethality" is an apocalyptic near-future story with an odd, shocking climax, and has the distinction of containing the one image in the book that I wish I could forget.

Yet, overall, I was not very engaged by this collection. The many stories that have horror as part of the plot are weaker than the few stories where the horror arises from the convolutions of character or as an intrinsic part of an overall vision. Like *The Sun Rises Red*, *Darklands 2* has only one strong mood, but it has the disadvantage of being much longer. Too many of the stories work from the premise that death is both a proper conclusion to a story and frightening in itself, and, assembled as they are, they establish a situation of diminishing returns. Dip into this book rather than read it in one go.

Finally, *Eidolon* is a small Australian science-fiction quarterly, available from Richard Scrivens, PO Box 225, North Perth, Western Australia, 6006, at a cost of A\$44 (air) or A\$34 (sea) for four issues. On the evidence of the single issue I've seen (Autumn 1992) I can recommend it. Very well presented, with terrific, even elegant, artwork, it contains three strong stories (Geoffrey Moloney, Sean McMullen and Terry Dowling) and a weak one (Harlan Ellison); a rambling and slightly loopy film-review section called "Critical Embuggerance"; plus a column of scientific speculation/comment; plus a reviews section. Comparisons are both inevitable and in this case (I hope) productive; if you like *Interzone*, this is for you. Look it up.

(Philip Gladwin)

British Magazine Reviews

John Duffield

Arthur Straker has gone and done it! When we all thought it was dead and buried, *REM* has risen from the grave. Issue 2 is 56 A4 pages of neutron-star density typesetting, with graphicized photo illos and a glossy two-colour cover. It looks pretty professional, and is only £1.95 for no less than 10 stories.

John Shirley's "Where It's Safe" is a diatribe against big business and pollution. The People's Terrorists execute a fat cat in his home, but after a mock trial, tension and a shoot-out. I liked it. Another good story came from, gosh, Simon Ings with his "Witchy Miriam's Book," a droll old tale about a couple of US farmers struggling against the drought outside the domed city. Also good is "The Lord Y Comes" by David Wingrove, all about planetary explorers and a mega radio-beacon artefact

in a *Chung Kuo* future. It is delivered with a gentle, slow, ultimately deadly attitude, and touched me.

There's also some very average stuff from Andrew J. Wilson, Garry Kilworth, and sadly, Storm Constantine. The first is another story about planetary explorers and a mega artefact, though this time it's a maze covering a whole hemisphere. Instead of putting it up on the main console for a good decko, or even setting down smack in the middle, they send in a guy in a land-dozer to meander his way to the centre. Dozeballs. Garry Kilworth's "My Lady Lygia" is one of those Victorian-style stuffed-shirt efforts with the place names in the form of "M-----." Real zimmer-frame stuff. The Storm Constantine "Preservation" novella is about a tribe of self-imposed primitives intercut with the high-tech anthropologists saving them from the mid-tech aggressives. The viewpoint changes break the flow and make the story feel way too long.

And as for "Seasonal Greetings from Bacup," written by somebody called Colin Greenland... It must be a Colin Greenland, aged circa eleven and a half, not the Colin Greenland. There's more nonsense such as "The Electric Waterfall" by Marc Laidlaw, and Andy Darlington's distasteful porno "Under Two Moons." Sheesh, that'll really please the lady readers. And I did not like "Jump From A Speeding Car." It was written by some alternative pun-kette called Julie Travis, and features: *I snatched a little girl on her way home from school and strangled her in a back alley.* Enough. Hey Joo-ley, when us parents of young children get together to throw a lynching party for your sort of hero, I'm going to be the one who slaps the horse.

The magazine looks good, and you get a lot for your money. Including some awful drek. But seeing as the rubbish is the short stuff, the hit rate isn't that bad. Worth buying. Oh, and I almost forgot: the non-fiction is quite good too.

REM: A4, 56 pages, named after the band. £1.95 per issue, or a four-issue sub for £7.50. The latter will keep you going until the heat death of the universe. Available from REM Publications, 19 Sandringham Road, Willesden, London, NW2 5EP.

Back Brain Recluse is another magazine that's climbed out of its coffin. To give you the background, editor Chris Reed lost a lot of dosh printing 3,000 copies of issue 19 for a distribution deal that didn't work out. (Anybody who wants to lag their loft on the cheap should contact Chris at the address below.) Later came the slender, fiction-free number 20, despatched gratis to subscribers only; rumour has it that it was the best *BBR* for ages. Seriously though, the new

issue 21 is a chunky, 84-page perfect-bound A4 glossy in dangerous yellow and black. The cover is just beautiful, showing a cool underwater dude blowing bubbles amongst the piranhas. Inside, the paper and print quality is marvellous, with more lovely illustrations by Dreyfus, Jason Hurst, and Dave Mooring.

On the fiction front it kicks off with "Beach Weather" by Carole T. Noble of Massachusetts. This is a piece about somebody pulling on an unattended kite string. Only instead of a kite they draw down a hole in the sky that starts to suck up the beach. It's perhaps atmospheric, but that's all. In similar vein is "The Crystal Heart," a longer work about a man called D receiving a letter that unfolds into an unwashed shirt. Then, like the story, he rambles around on his bike for a while. Hmm. Author Gabriel de Anda is from Los Angeles.

A refreshing return to prose normality is brought by Uncle River's "Mogollon News," bite-sized snippets of New Mexico mountain life. The flavour here is lifted straight out of Garrison Keillor's *Lake Wobegone Days*, but nevermind, it's mildly humorous and likeable. Then comes "A Toothsome Smile, An Artificial Death," about a bunch of yobs stomping a robot performing dog whilst his owner stands silently by. It was written by a Czech lady called Eva Hauser. Anyhow, we get back to the seriously offbeat with "This Is Your Life Kit" by R.V. Banham, from hey, Los Angeles. It seems to be about a guilt-laden Vietnam Vet reminiscing whilst assembling a kind of flatpack coffin. The story(?) was hard going, and didn't interest me enough to delve for understanding. Then there's more "Mogollon News," closely followed by hurray, our very own Tim Nickels from Devon, England. His "Born In The Forest" is another atmospheric piece, this time about an age-old wildwoods man evading a hunting party. It is however energetic, and did something for me.

"Photography Is Not Permitted" by Roger Thomas is interesting, all about a corporation which commission a painting that shapes their future in a mysteriously intangible way. It's written in the first person plural, with inserted memos and speeches, but the concept is good. I keep thinking about it. Then comes yet more "Mogollon News," which is getting a little tiresome now. But finally there's "Ancient Flavours" by Conrad Williams, featuring a restaurant owner in alliance with a Scylla & Charybdis couple of crusty creatures down in a cave at the foot of a cliff. The restaurant specializes in ambrosiac seafood with strong aphrodisiacal properties, but of course there's a price to pay. Not bad, Conrad.

What else? There's articles, letters, and a slab of reviews, including a



Illustrations by Gerry Grace

"Privacy isn't one of the privileges of a National Treasure."

Then she slid out of her chair as if she was made of oiled snake, not woman, and left.

That night I lay awake in my efficiency, thinking of the way she moved, of her black eyes, of her voice skating through several different layers at once, like ocean currents.

Thursday, she was back. She was wearing black, the same dusty charcoal black as her hair. It made her skin look warm and rich, like cello wood. I slipped out from behind the bar and took a couple of beers to her table.

"You didn't get my name last time," I said, and put a beer in front of her. "I'm Kate." I held out my hand. She turned away, pretending she hadn't seen it.

"Go," she said, not looking at me. "My guards are here."

"Oh?" I glanced round, casually. "Where?" Sometimes if you humour people, they quit.

Not Nadia.

"Over by the pool table. Two of them. Earrings, short hair. One has beer, the other a shot glass." She'd just described the entire clientele. But she wasn't finished. "They're both wearing loose jackets. They have guns."

If she didn't want me at her table she just had to say so. But the thing was, I think she did want me there. I stayed.

She watched the dance floor for a minute. "Meet me in the bathroom in five minutes," then she got up to play the pinball machine.

I served a couple of people, and kept watch on the two women by the pool table. Their faces were in shadow, but one had an outwardly bent little finger, as though it had been broken and badly set. They didn't even glance at Nadia.

In the bathroom, Nadia was by the mirror, standing with feet wide and balanced, hands relaxed, but I could tell she was humming with tension. Even in the harsh neon, she was beautiful.

"I don't know why I'm doing this," she said.

I didn't, either.